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INFO RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 6569
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E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: PREL, PA
SUBJECT: KENNEDY'S MEETING WITH PARAGUAYAN OPPOSITION
- DRAWS GOP WRATH

REFERENCE: ASUNCION 215

1. SENATOR KENNEDY'S JANUARY 14 MEETING WITH PARAGUAYAN OPPOSITION REPRESENTATIVES IN BUENOS AIRES DREW A FRESH ROUND OF CRITICISM. KENNEDY HAD ALREADY ELICITED CONDEMNATION BY GOP OFFICIALS BY CALLING FOR A "RETURN TO DEMOCRACY" IN PARAGUAY WHEN HE VISITED NEIGHBORING BRAZIL (REFTEL).

2. JANUARY 14 KENNEDY MET WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES "IN EXILE" OF PARAGUAY'S NATIONAL ACCORD (NA), AN UNEASY COALITION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES. THE MEETING WAS ORIGINALLY RUMORED TO TAKE PLACE WITH TWO PARAGUAYAN EXILES: DOMINGO LAINO, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AUTHENTIC RADICAL LIBERAL PARTY (PLRA), AND LUIS RESCK OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (PDC). RESCK, HOWEVER, WENT TO GUATEMALA FOR PRESIDENT CEREZO'S INAUGURATION, AND LAINO DID NOT APPEAR AT THIS MEETING. ATTENDING WERE MIGUEL ABDON SAGUIER, PLRA SECRETARY GENERAL; MIGUEL ANGEL GONZALEZ CASABIANCO OF THE MOPOCO; AND ORLANDO OTTAVIANO OF THE FEBRERISTA REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (PRF). THEY INVITED KENNEDY TO VISIT PARAGUAY, AND TO SEE BEYOND THE DEMOCRATIC FACADE OF THE STROESSNER REGIME (SEE FBIS PY 150120). KENNEDY PROMISED TO VISIT PARAGUAY WHEN IT IS ONCE AGAIN A "FREE COUNTRY," AND ASSURED THE NA REPRESENTATIVES THAT THEY HAVE ALLIES ON CAPITOL HILL AND IN THE REST OF THE UNITED STATES. APPARENTLY NOT AWARE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING IN ASUNCION WITH THE NA LEADERSHIP ON JANUARY 3, KENNEDY ALSO TOLD HIS INTERLOCUTORS THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT A MEETING WITH NA REPRESENTATIVES WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PERMITTED IF HE HAD VISITED PARAGUAY.

3. ALSO AT THE MEETING WERE AT LEAST TWO RADIO JOURNALISTS WHO TAPED THE DIALOGUE, WHICH WAS BROADCAST THE SAME DAY IN PARAGUAY. RADIO NANDUTI'S REPORTER, OSCAR ACOSTA, WAS BRIEFLY DETAINED BY PARAGUAYAN OFFICIALS AT THE BORDER JANUARY 16 WHEN HE RETURNED TO ASUNCION. HIS TAPES OF THE KENNEDY MEETING WERE CONFISCATED, AS WELL AS

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SOME PRINTED MATERIALS. THE OWNER OF RADIO NADUTI, WHICH IS REGULARLY IN CONFLICT WITH THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT, HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO RECOVER THE MATERIALS, AND TOLD THE EMBASSY HE FEARS THE GOP MAY TAKE OUT ITS ANGER WITH THE KENNEDY MESSAGE ON THE MESSENGER.

4. IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, GOP OFFICIALS ARE VENTING THEIR HOSTILITY PUBLICLY. INTERIOR MINISTER MONTANARO CRITICIZED "THOSE WHO ARE NOW BEGGING FOR FOREIGN INTERVENTION TO SATISFY THEIR LUST FOR POWER BECAUSE OF THEIR WELL-KNOWN LACK OF POPULAR SUPPORT." MONTANARO ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER KENNEDY BELIEVES PARAGUAY IS A "BANANA REPUBLIC OR A PUERTO RICO, WHICH THE U.S. HANDLES AS AN APPENDAGE OF THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION." (SEE FBIS PY 160232).

TAYLOR
END OF MESSAGE

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